

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) has secured approval of a total of \$500,000 in federal funding to enhance public safety in Sarasota County and the City of Venice.

The House Fiscal Year 2010 "Homeland Security Appropriations Act" (H.R.2892), which passed the House last night, 389-37, includes \$300,000 Buchanan requested for a new Public Safety Center in Sarasota County. The county is currently planning and designing a new 50,000 square foot facility to house its emergency operations center.

"The county's emergency operations center is currently housed in a facility that was not designed to withstand a major hurricane," said Buchanan. "This funding is necessary to ensure its ability to provide public safety services in the event of disaster."

"We greatly appreciate Congressman Buchanan's help in securing federal funds to help us construct a new hurricane-hardened Emergency Operations Center," said Jon Thaxton, chair of the Sarasota Commission. "Federal funds will be used to supplement local revenue to construct this badly needed emergency command center."

"The County Emergency Operations Center is the heart of our emergency response efforts for hurricanes and other threats," said Ed McCrane, Emergency Management Chief. "The center must be built to withstand the destructive forces of a hurricane so we can manage operations to assure the safety of our citizens and first responders."

The bill also includes \$200,000 Buchanan sought for improvements to allow the City of Venice's Community Center to be used as a public shelter.

"When disaster strikes, people need a safe place to ride out the storm," said Buchanan. "This money will be used to help provide infrastructure and equipment necessary for the community center to function as a Red Cross approved shelter and special needs facility during an emergency."

The city plans to harden the building and install a modernized energy generation system to provide power during storm events.

"The city of Venice is grateful for Congressman Buchanan's support of this safety item that will provide an opportunity to shelter people with special needs during a storm, and help to centralize a recovery effort after a major emergency. It has been a priority of ours for the last two years," Venice Mayor Ed Martin said.